



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **2019 Recipient of the Margaret Bancroft Distinguished Leadership Award Department of Special Education – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL (October 5, 2018) The Winston Knolls Education Group has announced the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, as the recipient of the prestigious 2019 Margaret Bancroft Distinguished Leadership Award. The award recognizes the accomplishments of this exceptional department whose professional achievements, public and civic service, are reflected in their dedication and meritorious accomplishments.

The College of Education burst on the national scene in special education and Autism research back in 1952, when Samuel Kirk founded the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children. The Special Education Department has been a highly regarded department ever since. Dr. Kirk's research at Illinois was the first of its kind to study exceptional or special-needs learners, and it pinpointed gaping holes in curriculum for students with learning disabilities and Autism. In addition, the University of Illinois headed by Kirk contributed significantly to legislation that became the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**.

Samuel Kirk is far from the College's sole contributor to the field. The College was home for nearly 40 years to Merle B. Karnes, who received the highest award given by the US Council for Exceptional Children, the J.E. Wallace Wallin Lifetime Achievement Award. It also has been home for many years to Jim Halle, professor emerita in Special Education, who has been recognized for his excellence in research on individuals with communication delays and disabilities, including children with autism spectrum disorder. Along with Jeanette McCollum, professor emerita in Special Education, who has received numerous awards for her excellence in teaching and research in early childhood special education.

The strength of the department is reflected in its national rankings: #8 in 2017 for its graduate special education program (2017 US News & World Report), and #2 in its 2015 undergraduate program. The department currently holds a #9 ranking in the nation. Following are a few breakthroughs that show why the College continues to be a game changer in special education – and particularly in autism intervention.

The Special Education Department has long been a leader in research that promotes effective, inclusive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and autism spectrum disorder across the life span. Faculty and students pursue research, teaching, and service activities that improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. They offer programs leading to a bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees.

The Margaret Bancroft Distinguished Leadership Award will be presented at the Annual Bancroft Awards Dinner on Sunday, January 27, 2019 at the Barrington White House, in Barrington, Illinois. Tickets will be purchased at \$85 and a table of ten can be purchased for \$850. Please call 630-744-6020 for additional information and to purchase tickets.

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